

through the full committee, and as you know, the ranking member moved to substitute the Interior bill rather than do the Labor-Health bill.

The chairman believed he was pursuing the regular order. I have never seen, in the 23 years that I served on the Appropriations Committee, one of the appropriations bills substituted for another one of the appropriations bills in the appropriations process.

So a lot of unusual things are happening, unfortunately. And we haven't been pursuing regular order. I lament that, personally. I think that we ought to do that.

I will say that last year, as you know, we passed every appropriations bill through the House of Representatives by the August break. We had some difficulty at the end doing that, but we got them all passed. And we passed them all in the year, in the calendar year that we were supposed to pass them, not in the fiscal year, in December. As you know in a number of years we didn't do that until the following year: nine one year, eight the other passed in January, the end of January or the middle of February, as I recall, 2 years. I forget whether it was 2004 and 2005 or 2005 and 2006.

So I share the gentlemen's concern. I think both sides share the concern that the appropriations process is not proceeding in the regular order. But I want to say to the gentleman that from my perspective, I have not concluded that we're not going to consider any appropriations bills on the floor.

Mr. BLUNT. I just suggest, the statement I read, and perhaps it was not accurate, but it seemed like an incredibly definitive statement on the part of the chairman; and since this is the work that the Congress has to do to fund the government, I would assume that the chairman will soon be conferring with the leader and the Speaker to determine if bills are coming to the floor or not.

Mr. HOYER. Will my friend yield on that?

Mr. BLUNT. I would.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you.

Senator REID in the other body has made it pretty clear that he does not believe, again, given the failure to pursue regular order in the Senate, that he will be able to get any bills passed, the Senate appropriations bills.

So one of the factors under consideration by Mr. OBEY is that if the Senate is not going to consider any bills, that because they cannot get the bills through the House and to the President—of course, the President sent down a number, said, If you go over that number, I'm going to veto all of the bills anyway. And we had real difficulty last year, as you know, with that happening. That's not happened in my career before. I don't mean that a President hasn't indicated he would veto, but there was always room to work on that.

But that is one of the complicating factors or two of the complicating fac-

tors: the President's position and the Senate's position as well.

But I think the major problem is that the regular order Mr. OBEY did not feel was being pursued in the committee.

Mr. BLUNT. We might ask Mr. OBEY what his views might be about his bills that are already through the committee in regular order and why those five bills couldn't come to the House.

You know, we have, in the years of our majority, always with an open rule, taken substantial time. It seemed to me 1 year we took five full days of hearing amendments on the Labor HHS bill and other bills, numerous bills at a time.

The evaluation of last year, the House passed its bills, but at the end of the day, we had one vote on one big bill which may not have been nearly as healthy as having nine individual votes and then having to carry three bills over into the next year to get them done one at a time. But that's not really the question.

The question is what about the bills that are out of the committee now and what would be a violation of any regular order problem to bring those to the House and take the time that we clearly have? We're passing a lot of legislation off the House floor, but not very much of it winds up on the President's desk. If we begin to determine the House schedule based on what the Senate is willing to do and a bill that can get to the President, not much of what we've done in the last several weeks really had much impact.

But I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I would not agree with the gentleman. After all, we did pass the Iraq funding, we passed a very substantive supplemental, we passed a GI bill, we passed an unemployment insurance extension. We passed an energy bill last year signed by the President. I think much of what we passed in our '06 that was passed, that got through the Senate, was signed by the President and supported by a significant number of Republicans.

Furthermore, let me just remind you, and I'm sure you recall this, that we took 50 hours longer to do the appropriations bills last year than we did in 2006 when your side was in charge. And we had extensive debate. We had 10 open bills, open rules, and we had two rules at the end, because it was clear that we were having great difficulty getting our bills done in a time cramp. Even under those bills, we spent hours debating them. We spent 17 hours on the Homeland Security bill, for instance, and 12 hours on the Labor-Health bill on the floor.

Mr. BLUNT. If we don't deal with any bills this year, I guess our average is going to go down quickly. If we had 12 hours on Labor H last year and zero this year, I guess for this Congress we will say we spent an average of 6 hours debating the bills because one of them never got debated at all.

Mr. HOYER. I don't want to get too testy, and you and I are good friends.

Mr. BLUNT. We are.

Mr. HOYER. But very frankly, it was not a process that we thought was very substantive last year, and every indication that we have received this year, it is not going to be very substantive this year when we consider appropriation bills.

Now, having said that, we didn't pursue the regular order on the Labor-Health bill. The gentleman is correct there are five bills which have passed, and I would reiterate that I have not yet, from my standpoint, concluded that we're not going to consider appropriation bills on the floor this year.

So I want to make it clear. I'm not sure exactly what Mr. OBEY announced. There was an article that said I was supporting Mr. OBEY's position. I went a little further. What I supported of Mr. OBEY's position was that regular order was not being followed in the appropriations committee, not the representation that you say he made with reference to no bills coming to the floor.

I think he's correct that regular order is not being pursued, and very frankly—and I'm going to talk to you about that, talk to my friend about this, because I think it is unfortunate that we have come to this place where the consideration of these bills last year became very politicized, and this year the announcement clearly was very early on out of your conference or your retreat and subsequently that it wasn't going to be a very happy process this year. I don't mean an agreement process. No reason why there should be an agreement. But Mr. OBEY has concerns that it would simply be impossible for him to get the bills through.

Mr. BLUNT. He's a capable man, and I'm sure he can figure out a way.

So I would like to close by saying we would like to see at least the bills that are through the full committee on the floor and would hope that the energy bills that the gentleman is looking at can come to the floor with a rule that allows a substantial and full debate on this critical problem of both gas prices at the pump now and home heating and other things that are going to quickly become problems for Americans.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, JULY 14, 2008

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning-hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

CONGRATULATING SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE EDWARDS

Mr. HOYER. Before I ask for the next unanimous consent, let me say how pleased I am that Congresswoman EDWARDS, I think this is her first time in